Airlines, Private operators are being encouraged to add more stations in their networks, subject to viability.

Extension of Calcutta-Chennai National Highway

2987. SHRI N.K. PREM-CHANDRAN :
SHRI N.N. KRISHNA-DAS :
SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to extend the Calcutta-Chennai National Highway utpo Thiruvanantha-puram in Kerala;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Kerala will be included in the corridor formed with an intention to develop the National Highways; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) Thiruvananthapuram is already connected with Chennai through National Highway Nos. 45, 7 and 47.

(c) and (d) Though the main thrust for development of National Highways during the 9th Plan will be for four high density corridors linking Delhi-Calcutta, Chennai & Mumbai, the other National Highways including these passing through Kerala will aslo be developed during the 9th Plan keeping in view the traffic intensity, overall priority of work and the availability of funds.

Helicopter shot down by Militants in Assam

2988. SHRI N. RAMAKRISHNA REDDY : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the name of the militant group that shot down the helicopter carrying Major General Kashev Singh near Kohima in Assam;

(b) whether some rocket was used to shot down the helicopter; and

(c) the sources of rockets and other arms that have come in the possession of the militants in Assam ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) and (b) According to the information received from Army HQrs the helicopter crashed due to inclement weather and not on account of shooting down by any militant group.

(c) The militants in Assam are reported to be getting arms from various sources, including other militant groups operating in the region.

Tourist From Australia

2989. SHRI CHANDRABHUSHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has got its office at Sydney headed by a Director;

(b) the total monthly expenditure incurred by the Ministry to run the said office at Sydney; and

(c) the total number of tourists visited India from Australia during the last three years ?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) The Central Department of Tourism has its Regional Office for Australasia Region at Sydney. It is headed by a Regional Director.

(b) The monthly expenditure incurred on running of the office at Sydney for the year 1996-97 is as follows :

Month	(Rs. in lakhs)
Apr 96	6.94
May 96	7.43
June 96	5.06
July 96	7.46
Aug 96	7.96
Sept 96	7.30
Oct 96	7.00
Nov 96	7.33
Dec 96	7.23
Jan 97	5.86
Feb 97	6.14
Mar 97	8.56

(c) Tourist arrivals from Australia during the last three years are as under :

year	Tourist Arrrival from Asutralia
1994.	33,142
1995	36,150
1996	48,755